

"Meanwhile, the Minister has a clear duty to carry out the instructions of Parliament as expressed in the Act, and he can no longer postpone the consultations which are a necessary preliminary to the setting up of the administrative machinery. He is, therefore, proceeding to consult all the many other interests which will be concerned in the National Health Service. He is also considering what ought to be done—and this is a matter to which he attaches great importance—to give the medical profession the opportunity of assisting to shape, and of playing its part in, the new service."

MEN and BOOKS

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TORONTO MEDICAL HISTORICAL CLUB*

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That a club with a membership so limited as ours should have had an uninterrupted existence of nearly twenty-five years is unusual, and may be explained by our ready conformity to our unwritten constitution, which demands in a member only an agreeable personality and a willingness to contribute to an evening's entertainment. Without this latter requirement for membership, most clubs of our sort soon degenerate into mere social gatherings or disappear entirely. Dr. Crane, of Western Medical Faculty, adds however, in one of his letters, "the surprising thing to me is, that it (the Club) has carried along for the last twenty-three years; most clubs die in early infancy. Evidently there was a need and place for it; otherwise it would not have survived".

The birth of our Historical Club took place under interesting circumstances. Luckily I was able to get the important details in connection with the birth from Dr. Crane direct, and from the excellent notes made by Dr. Tovell in the early days of the Club's existence. Dr. Crane seems to have been the one most responsible for originating the idea of forming a historical club and in this connection we may reproduce one of his letters at length:

"The birth of your Historical Club in Toronto is rather unique. In February, 1923, I was doing some research work in Toronto with Dr. Banting, and I received a London paper stating that Dr. J. J. Walsh of New York was coming to London. I was anxious to meet him because I had read his books and had heard that he was a splendid speaker. So I went over to Brunswick Avenue and called on Paul O'Sullivan because Paul is a devout Catholic, the same as Dr. Walsh. I asked Paul if it would be possible to persuade Walsh to come to Toronto, and after we had discussed that problem, Paul started in to tell me about Servetus. After a half hour's dissertation I said to Paul that it

seemed a shame that others in Toronto couldn't have the same privilege that I was enjoying, and I suggested that he invite a group to his home and have him repeat the paper. The first man I called up was Jabez [Elliott] and between the three of us we picked out about a dozen or more men. Then it occurred to me that this would be an opportunity to form an historical club. At the meeting* I suggested a certain number of other names, and increasing the size of the Club, but it was unanimously decided that the membership be closed and that it be known as the 'Toronto Medical Historical Club'. Before the next meeting I came back to London and I think I have only attended two or three meetings since its inauguration. I think Jabez was the first president but I am not sure of the names of the other officers. So I have had very little to do with your organization since 1923."

The Dr. Walsh to whom Professor Crane refers was the late Professor J. J. Walsh of the Medical Faculty of Fordham University, the well known Roman Catholic Institution in New York. An exceptionally well versed student of the history of medicine, one finds him referred to in the Garrison *History of Medicine* no less than eleven times. He was the author of a history of medicine in North America and contributed extensively on the subject. He was professor of nervous diseases as well as professor of the history of medicine, and at the time of his death in 1942 was Dean of the Medical Faculty. One remembers that years ago one of his contributions bore the title "The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries". This provoked an active discussion in which Sir William Osler took a leading part.

Whether Paul O'Sullivan read his paper on Servetus to a selected group I cannot determine. The first gathering of those interested in the history of medicine seems to have been at Dr. Elliott's house and little else took place so far as the organization of the Club was concerned during 1923. The ferment however was evidently at work and a formal meeting must have been arranged for January 24, 1924, at the house of Dr. Elliott.

A congenial group had been gathered together—Sir Bertram Windle, Drs. H. B. Anderson, J. N. E. Brown, Arnold Clarkson, George Porter, Professors Brett, Horace Speakman, Wasteneys, J. W. Crane, of London, Ont., and Dr. Paul O'Sullivan. With Dr. Elliott these enthusiasts made up the membership at this first meeting. Dr. Elliott as host was installed in the chair, a secretary, Dr. Paul O'Sullivan, was elected and Judge Riddell, Sir Bertram Windle and Professor J. W. Crane were elected to honorary membership. The business of organization then began. Dr. Elliott outlined the purposes of

* After twenty-three years Dr. Crane's memory might be a little uncertain. One notes on page two that he has called up Jabez Elliott after being in touch with Dr. O'Sullivan and the three of them came together, discussed matters and suggested the names of a dozen or more men. This is not the meeting to which he refers two or three lines below. The meeting at which he suggests a certain number of other names, and increasing the size of the Club was the larger gathering which took place at Dr. Elliott's house at a later date.

* Read before the Toronto Medical Historical Club, October 18, 1946.

calling his guests together. These were to encourage research in the history of medicine in general and in the history of Canadian medicine in particular. He suggested that the Club should collect and preserve any article of historical value.

Following the open general discussion, the Chairman called for suggestions as to what form the Club should take. Dr. Anderson proposed an organization which might add to its numbers at any time. Professor Speakman emphasized as a start the study of general medicine. Professor Wasteney's urged that each member be allowed to develop his individual taste. Dr. Porter felt that the historical section of the Academy of Medicine was quite inadequate for its purpose and that a medical historical club would fill a long felt want. Dr. J. N. E. Brown favoured an open membership. He suggested that the Club meet at Hart House and dine. He did not feel that the Club should limit itself to things dealing purely with medical history. He thought that immediate attention should be paid to our local history since the pioneer men had dropped or were dropping out.

It was finally decided that meetings should take place at the homes of the various members. There was to be an executive committee of three. The member at whose home the meeting should take place was to be the host, the chairman, and to be responsible for the evening's program. The Club was to have a limited membership of about thirteen or fourteen since in many cases the homes of the various members were hardly suited for large gatherings. The meetings were to take place once a month during the late fall, winter, and early spring. It was proposed that the Club bear a name such as Osler, Widmer, Workman, following a custom now very general in the medical schools of today but in the end, it was decided that the simple title "Toronto Medical Historical Club" might be more appropriate for an organization which was not limiting its membership to purely medical men.

It would seem that an election of an executive committee took place, but there is nothing to confirm this, and it would look as if such a committee had never carried on. The place and time of the next meeting was decided upon. Dr. H. B. Anderson and Dr. J. N. E. Brown offered to read papers. It was decided that the Club might add to its members and several names were proposed. Dr. Elliott exhibited a number of his interesting and valuable books.

The names of those who might be called the charter members of the Club have been mentioned. In the course of the next meetings, Drs. Tovell and Sir Frederick Banting were unanimously elected to membership. Dr. Tovell was promptly penalized by being made archivist. Having been commissioned by Drs. Allan Baines, Alex. McPhedran and Maude Abbott to give sketches of Osler's early life, it was supposed that I had an historical bent, and might

be admitted to select circles. Previous to Sir William Osler's death, however, I had only made one contribution to the history of medicine, a paper read in Baltimore on "Dietl's Aphorisms on Phlebotomy".

Careful scouting revealed the fact that two outstanding characters in Toronto—Professors Oscar Klotz and Playfair McMurrich—were deeply interested in the history of medicine. Companionable and congenial to an unusual degree, they were at once admitted to the Club, bringing the active membership to fourteen. In 1927, following the reading of an excellent paper on the "Psychology of Research" Professor Walter Libby was elected to honorary membership. Dr. Libby, let it be known, lectured on the history of medicine at the University of Pittsburg and is the author of a short and delightful history of medicine. He has as well, made many other contributions on the subject.

At meeting subsequent to 1924, the office of president must have been created, an office to be held for one year. All of the original members held this office in turn, except Sir Frederick Banting and Professor Speakman, whose staff meetings clashed with those of the Club. Professor Speakman was therefore elected to honorary membership in 1932 as was Sir Frederick in 1936. To aid the president in his arduous duties a silver mounted gavel made from wood taken from the ruins of the house in which Sir William Osler was born, was presented to the Club at one of its meetings in 1926. With the election of Professor Holman in 1936 seemed to have begun the custom of making each new member of the Club, president for the ensuing year.

The important position of secretary to the Club was held in succession by Drs. Paul O'Sullivan, Porter and Clarkson up to March, 1945, when Dr. Wasteney's agreed to assume this responsibility. Dr. Paul O'Sullivan, the first secretary, was elected president in the second year of the Club's existence. Dr. Porter is noted as being the second secretary in 1925 and apparently was kept in office till 1941, when he resigned in favour of Dr. Clarkson, who in turn was secretary till 1945.

As early as 1925 Dr. Porter notes, "It was decided that the secretary should take notes of the proceedings and keep them on file for reference but not present them formally each night." As already noted an archivist was early appointed in the person of Dr. Harold Tovell. In a personal letter to me, Dr. Tovell deplores the delinquency of Club members in not handing over to him their papers or communications for collection. Some papers he says are at the Academy of Medicine in the librarian's keeping. Many others on the other hand have been published in various journals, and it is realized, of course, that many presen-

tations before the Club are not in such form that their reproduction is possible.

Such were the foundations upon which the present society was laid, foundations which remained unaltered for twelve years, from 1924 to 1936 save for the death of Sir Bertram Windle in 1929 and the election to honorary membership of Professor Walter Libby in 1927. The limitation of membership to fourteen was steadily adhered to.

An old saying is worded, "Happy the people whose annals are blank in history books",* annals meaning of course, a history of death, wars, pestilence or internal disturbances. These twelve years of the Club's history rolled peacefully by with nothing but the happiest incidents to record—Banting's trip to the Arctic, Klotz's appointment by the Rockefeller Institute to study yellow fever in Africa, Elliott's election to the Chair of the History of Medicine at Toronto, and to the presidency of the American society of the same name. One records with pleasure that Professor McMurrich was asked by the Carnegie Institute to write the life of Leonardo.

The inevitable however, was approaching and Oscar Klotz answered the last call in 1936, barely three months after he had entertained us with an account of the School of Medicine at Leyden. Professor Hölman was elected to the vacancy, and Professor Coventry was admitted in the following year, 1937. Professor McMurrich died in 1939, allowing Dr. R. I. Harris to be elected a member of the Club. Two years later, February 21, 1941, Sir Frederick Banting died tragically in a plane accident. His death permitted the election of Professor MacIlwraith in the same year. The deaths of Professor Elliott in 1942, and of Paul O'Sullivan and J. N. E. Brown in 1943, permitted the admission of Drs. Shanks, Trebilcock and Daly, while the retirement of Dr. H. B. Anderson made room for Dr. Cameron; since Dr. Tovell finds it difficult to come from the country to the gatherings, a place was found for Dr. Craigie. Professor Brett's death permitted the admission to membership of Professor C. B. Farrar.

I may draw this detailing of organization and personnel to an end by noting that Dr. H. E. MacDermot, of Montreal, the editor of the *Journal of the Canadian Medical Association*, was elected an honorary member in 1943. Among his many contributions in the line of the history of medicine is his life of Dr. Maude Abbott, who without question can be listed as foremost among Canadian medical authors. To conclude I must refer sadly to Dr. H. B. Anderson's retirement; and to the death of one of the first of our honorary members—Judge Riddle—in February, 1945. His interest in the history of medicine is evidenced by his long list of publications. He was often seen at the Acad-

emy's historical and literary nights and he is recorded as having contributed one of the first papers to be given before the Club, "Some early medical prescriptions". These prescriptions are now at the Academy of Medicine, as are also several of the Judge's reprints.

How best to put before you the vital part of the Club's performances, the quantity and quality of papers and presentations, is no easy matter. I must spare the blushes of the members present, and time, certainly, will not allow one to make note of all the papers and presentations which the secretaries have listed as having been given. These now number 135 and with few exceptions were contributions by Club members. I can find no mention of paper of presentation by Sir Bertram Windle, nor do I see that he was present at any save the earliest of our meetings. That he had a genuine interest in the history of medicine is shown by a paper he read before the Academy of Medicine in 1922 on "Medicine and surgery in early mediæval England". Professor of anthropology at St. Michael's, and special lecturer on ethnology at the University, Sir Bertram was widely known as a scholar and above all as a kindly gentleman. Some of you may remember his interesting will in which he provided for scholarships for English Roman Catholic students, they, according to Sir Bertram, being the finest type of Roman Catholic.

Present at some of our meetings were guest speakers, such as Judge Latchford of the Ontario bench, who spoke on his collection of shells. Dr. Francis gave the history of the Osler Library at McGill. Dr. Heagerty, of Ottawa, dwelt on the history of Canadian medicine. Dr. Drake, of Toronto, showed his collection of early feeding utensils and Professor Needler entertained us with a talk on the "Lone sheiling" at the last of the delightful entertainments likely to be given by H. B. Anderson. At one of our earlier meetings Dr. Tovell introduced to us Professor MacIlwraith, not as yet a member of the Club, who gave us a remarkable demonstration of the medical practice of the Indians of the West Coast.

This concludes the short history of the Toronto Medical Historical Club, for the details of which I am indebted to the early notes of Professor Grane, to the reports briefly made by the several secretaries already named, and to Miss Poole, librarian of the Academy of Medicine.

It is well to remind ourselves that the progress in control of tuberculosis has been in spite of incomplete and delayed reporting, in spite of the insidious and silent nature of early pulmonary disease, and in spite of the lack of any specific resources for creating immunity for cure in the chemotherapeutic sense.—*Diplomate*, December, 1946.

*An aphorism of Montesquieu quoted in Carlisle's "Life of Frederick the Great".